House Unit Checks Campus Speakers

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The House Internal Security Committee has sent letters to 179 colleges and universities, asking them to list all their guest speakers for the last two years, how much the speakers were paid and by whom.

The letters, which were sent out several weeks ago, were brought to light yesterday by Rep. Louis Stokes (D-Ohio), who called them "a direct encroachment on academic freedom."

A committee spokesman said they were just the reverse, that the whole exercise was voluntary and the letters had been phrased deliberately to avoid "an investigative aura or demand."

The letters were intended, the spokesman said, to find out whether "speaking is a source of finance" for groups the committee has been investigating. Among the groups, he said, are the Black Panthers, Students for a Democratic Society and the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam.

Letters Mailed

Letters were sent to three schools in each of the 50 states, "plus anywhere we read newspaper articles of revolutionary speakers," he said.

Nationally, such universities as Yale and Berkeley were sent the inquiries. Berkeley said it sent in its reply on Monday. Among local recipients were Howard, American, Georgetown and George Washington universities, and the universities of Maryland and Virginia.

John F. Morse, spokesman for the American Council on Education, said he had received calls from 20 or 25 schools in the last 10 days, most of them complaining about the dificulty of compiling the information, a few raising questions about "academic freedom."

Morse met yesterday afternoon with Rep. Richard H. Ichord (D-Me.), the committee chairman, and said afterward, "I did not feel Ichord's attitude was in any way a witch-hunting attitude."

$600. Limit

Morse noted that universities are already required to report to the Internal Revenue Service all honoraria in excess of $600.

But Stokes, who is a member of the committee, notified Case Western Reserve University in his home town of Cleveland that it could ignore the committee letter "with impunity."

The Internal Security Committee is successor to the House Committee on Un-American Activities.